

## ANNAMITE CIVILIZATION

aditude: Hanoi indicates a province surrounded by rivers; Haiphong, the sun sinking into the sea; Thai Binh, profound calm. Small provinces have the same type of administration as the big, only the rank of the head mandarin differs. A provincial governor, or *long* *doc*, has the rank of a Minister, Under him are three very important officials: the *quanbot* or head of the administration; the *quan-an*, or judicial mandarin; and the *lanh-binh* ^ or military commandant. The canton is important only as a buffer state between the people, whom it represents, and the provincial administration. It is the highest form of self-elected government whose officials are not mandarins imposed by the state. The canton has a head but no headquarters, for aside from the provincial capital there are really no important towns, only market pkces. Nor does the head of a canton necessarily live in the largest of his villages. The canton has nothing like the importance of the commune: its suppression would not disturb society, and its very existence seems in many ways artificial. But as a practical link between the independent commune and the autocratic central government, it serves to oil the wheels of the administration. When the French deprived the head of the canton of his elective character, they did not realize that by reducing him to the status of a state functionary they were destroying his essential usefulness. For all these officials, promotion came very slowly and always in the province to which they were originally assigned. Like all Annamite officialdom they were venal and arbitrary, but Confucianist ideals of high thinking and enforcedly plain living, as well as long contact with the people they administered, gave them a benevolent and paternalistic character. Reproduction of the identical organization throughout the whole

administration, in greater or lesser degree, gave to the empire an unusual uniformity.

Proceeding from the base of the Annamite social pyramid, the commune reproduces the family organization. The cult of the village genii parallels that of the family's ancestor worship: the authority of the communal Notables is analogous to that of the head of the family. The Annamite commune is not only a fiscal and an administrative unit, but a self-conscious city-state with its own history, its social and economic life, its own gods, politicians, and priests. Excessively jealous of its independence, the village has always tried to escape official notice. Markets are never held within its walls. The visiting mandarin finds **himself** in deserted streets and is never taken beyond the communal house where he does business. The basic fear, of course, is that official knowledge will mean an increase in taxation. The commune is the